

THE NATIONAL ERA.

WASHINGTON, MAY 13, 1847.

LETTER FROM MR. BENTON—IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT.

Our readers will recollect the strenuous efforts made last winter by the slaveholding members of the House of Representatives, under the leadership of Mr. Calhoun, to expunge from the bill establishing a Territorial Government in Oregon the usual clause prohibiting slavery or involuntary servitude. It was conceded on all sides that slavery could never flourish in that Territory, but Mr. Calhoun was averse to the clause because it implied disapprobation of the system of slavery, and would be an addition to the series of precedents sustaining the feeling of slavery exclusion. That was the instigator of this movement, but himself publicly announced in the Senate during the debate on the Wilmot proviso.

The representatives of the free States rallied, however, and voted down the motion to expunge, many even of the members from the South taking no interest in such amendment. The bill was then passed by a strong vote, very few of the slaveholding members voting against it.

In the Senate, instead of going to the Territorial Committee, the appropriate one, it was sent to the Committee on the Judiciary, the chairman and a majority of the members of which were slaveholders, and, as may be expected, was subsequently reported with the anti-slavery clause stricken out.

No anxiety was shown to consider the bill. The famous Baltimore convention had coupled the Territories of Texas and Oregon in its loving embrace; but while the former had been forced into the Union, and provided with a Government with such haste as scarcely ever characterized the accomplishment of any great legislative measure, the Administration played false towards Oregon, surrendering to a foreign power one-half of the territory it claimed, and the other half was permitted by the Federal Legislature to drag along its existence without the protection of any other Government than such as the hardy settlers there might erect for themselves.

Never was there a more striking illustration of the favoritism of the "powers that be" in this country towards slaveholding territory—a more shameful, humiliating exhibition of the subversiveness of the Government to the tyranny of the slave power.

Had there been any spirit among the Senators from the free States, that bill would have been taken up at once, the anti-slavery clause restored, and a Government provided for Oregon. But it was delayed till within a day or two of the close of the session, when, after a mere spasmodic effort to bring it under consideration, it was laid upon the table by the combined votes of Southern men generally and Northern Whigs! We know the excuse of the latter was, that it contained various objectionable features, to which they were unwilling to give their assent, relating, we believe, to corporation, the right of suffrage, &c.; but had they felt, as freemen ought to feel, proper indignation against the determination of Mr. Calhoun and the ultra slaveholders to compel Oregon to remain an alien from this Union, without protection or countenance from the Government, unless slavery were allowed to have free course in her territory, they would promptly have waived their pettys, and given the daring adventurers in that region a Legislature. We do not charge them with deliberately conspiring with Mr. Calhoun to keep this Territory out of our Union; but we do charge them with caring more for the opinion of the Whig Union than for the great cause of Human Freedom.

We have constantly referred to Mr. Calhoun as being the grand plotter in all this transaction. The letter we have from Mr. Benton will show the correctness of this reference. His statement is, that Mr. Calhoun is the real author of the amendment striking out the anti-slavery clause, while the Judiciary Committee "is only midwife to it." No one who has watched the untiring vigilance with which the Senator from South Carolina scents out and hunts down in Congress the slightest movement not in perfect harmony with slaveholding policy, can for a moment doubt this. The only wonder is, that Whig members of the Senate, pretending as they do to be the guardians of the anti-slavery interests, are so frequently entrapped by him, and made subservient to his sinister policy. There is more sympathy between these apparently antagonistic parties than ought to exist between the friends and foes of liberty. The Richmond (Va.) Whig regrets deeply that any member from the South voted for the Oregon Territorial bill with the anti-slavery clause in it, leaving it to be inferred that it would rather the people of that Territory should remain perpetual aliens than be indulged with a Government prohibiting the introduction of slavery—precisely the ground of Mr. Calhoun. The Whigs of the Senate, though aware of the design of this Senator, will not give up their deep devotion to him, and his friends, &c., and accordingly unite with him in defeating the bill. And now, when Mr. Benton comes out in the public prints with a full exposure of the grounds of slaveholding opposition to the bill, and shows, beyond all doubt, that its friends were baffled because they wished to extend the benefits of the noble ordinance of 1787—an ordinance sanctioned and sustained by Jefferson—we find Whig papers blindly, insanely, passing by all this without one word of remark, set themselves to the subtile employment of ridiculing the style and manner of Mr. Benton! Is this their love for human rights? What need they care for that gentleman's hostility to Mr. Calhoun, or his malignant language? Can they see nothing in the disclosures he made of sufficient importance to check their levity, to awaken their anxiety for the good of their country, to arouse their indignation against the "rabid propagandists of slavery?"

We call the attention of the Whig party, and of the Whig press, to these things. Let them read the letter that follows. We care not what may be their prejudices against the man—let them attend to what he says. He is very self-sufficient, and a very good hater of Mr. Calhoun—and, so far as this is the case, we have not one word to say in his behalf; but he is a keen-sighted, experienced politician, and undoubtedly far more reasonable on the subject of slavery, far less obnoxious to the free States, than the great majority of slaveholding politicians. Unlike the Senator from South Carolina, he can see something in his country beyond his own State, something in his institutions beside slavery. We need not ask for the letter the careful consideration of our Democratic readers. It is published in the *New Orleans Mercury*, a paper edited by a son-in-law of Mr. Benton. We are sorry, exceedingly sorry, to see in so respectable a paper as the *North American*, in which we have had the pleasure of reading some truthful articles on the slave question, no more respectful notice of the letter than the following:

"We sit down to this letter, perchance this letter, and enjoy a heavy laugh at the bold, though the inordinate vanity, amounting to megalomania, which pervades the whole proclamation. Benton evidently thinks the star of empire is shooting westward, and is for throwing an anchor—Hope's anchor."

And it is a thing to be laughed at that John C. Calhoun succeeded in defeating a bill for the establishment of a Territorial Government in Oregon, because it contained a prohibition of slavery!

LETTER FROM THE HON. T. H. BENTON.

WASHINGTON CITY, March, 1847.

"My Friends—(for such I may call many of you from personal acquaintance, and from years of study and research, to whom I owe the interest of your country.) I think it right to make this communication to you at the present moment, when the adjournment of Congress without passing the bill for your government and protection, seems to have left you in a state of abandonment by your mother, and to have exposed you to the care of men. Yet are not abandoned I will say, but denied protection for not agreeing to admit slavery. I, a man of the South and a slaveholder, tell you this."

"The House of Representatives, as early as the

middle of January, had passed the bill to give you a Territorial Government; and in that bill had sanctioned and legalized your slaveholding organization of the country, which further prohibits the existence of slavery in Oregon. An amendment from the Senate's committee to which this bill was referred, proposed to abrogate that provision; and in the delays and vexations of the session, that bill was given up, and the bill was laid on the table, and lost for the session. This will be a great disappointment to you, and a real calamity; already five years without law or legal institution for the protection of life, liberty, and property! and now denied to you, and not to be alarmed or despaired, you will not be outlawed but faithful dealing with our vices and short-comings. It is because public men will not venture upon this delicate task, (as they imagine,) that we are glad to see foreign critics admiringly upon the blemishes and blots of "that great republic!" Grant that they have indulged their vanity at the expense of truth sometimes, that their descriptions are too often caricatures, their censures not unfrequently the offspring of the very spirit they would rebuke in us, yet no sensible man can doubt that foreign censors and critics have been far more serviceable to us than the patriotic orators and demagogues and wily scoundrels, who are ever regaling the sovereign people with lying incense. Let us leave our numerous virtues and achievements to take care of themselves, and set about mending the faults and correcting the which we are sure to find in us but our multitudinous censor-bearers.

The reader will see an article on the first page of the *Era*, from Blackwood's Magazine, which, though a little spiteful and unfair, is infinitely more piquant and entertaining than all the sweet, pretty things that our orators can say of the Model Republic.

THE ILLUMINATION.

This city was the scene of a grand illumination last Saturday night. Bonfires were kindled rockets whizzed and exploded on every side, cannon thundered, and the whole city turned out to contemplate with proper admiration its own folly. White and Democrat strove which should signalize himself by the more striking devices. A peaceful himself of Escapulias, professional even in his rejoicing stuck up in front of his office a little transparency, all alone, bearing the inscription, "A Dove of Jalape." Dr. Scott? It was really medicinal. Windows were ornamented with red figures of Gen. Scott and Gen. Taylor, the latter being made to appear like the Fat Boy in Pickwick, and the former, converted into legs. The office of the *Intelligencer*, peculiarly hostile to the war, and with a heart running over with the love of peace, among other remarkable sayings of Gen. Taylor, had the following, inscribed in flaming letters upon a transparency: "A LITTLE MORE GRAPE, CAPTAIN BEAG!" Rather bloody for a peace man!

The correspondent of the *Baltimore Clipper* says:

"Arrived at the Navy Yard, Barrack street presented on each side uninterrupted streams of light with occasional transparencies. An arch arched over the street, and a transparent, and could not suppress a smile at the representation of Santa Anna's cork leg!"

"We have received the above production, and shall make it the theme of some brief remarks. While the bells of other churches Portsmouth were pealing merry notes of rejoicing over the glorious destruction of human life at Vera Cruz, the bell of the *Intelligencer* chimed out a note which could not suppress a smile at the representation of Santa Anna's cork leg!"

"The fireworks in the Navy Yard" says the *National Intelligencer*, "commenced at 9 o'clock, and continued until 12 M. The cork leg of the pyrotechnical display a large bonfire, consisting of one hundred and ten barrels, with other combustibles, forming a column forty feet high, was lighted up in the space between the Navy Yard and the Capitol. It is thought this last, "the bell of fire" would be seen at a distance of five or thirty miles down the Potowmack river. It certainly shed an immense glare of light all over the city."

"The number of spectators who witnessed this grand display at the Navy Yard was unusually great, and is thought by many who witnessed it that such a numerous gathering of people was never before seen in Washington. The most perfect order pervaded this great multitude during the whole evening. On a stage that was erected in front of the *Intelligencer* office, the notice, 'Santa Anna's Cork Leg,' was prominently displayed, and the *Intelligencer* was the only paper that could be seen in the crowd of spectators."

"Poor Santa Anna! that representation awakes recollections highly honorable to him. He wears a cork leg because he lost his real one in defending his country against the French. Unintentionally, our countrymen were commemorating by such a display the patriotic acts of the Texan army, which had as long as he could, with any prudence, proved by the following statement in the correspondence of the *New Orleans Delta*:

"Gen. Santa Anna, in his retreat, was so hotly pursued by Col. Harney, who had command of the 7th infantry and mounted troops, that he was forced to leave his splendid carriage, trunks, some \$70,000 silver, and one of his cork legs."

Neither bravery nor aristocracy required him vainly to throw away his life, or foolishly to put himself in the power of the victor. Imputations upon his personal courage are unfounded and ungenerous. The man who, in 1823, when but 30 years of age, an obscure colonel, dared to raise the standard of revolt, and march at the head of a single regiment against the tyrant Iturbide, surrounded as he was by 15,000 disengaged troops, and, when victory declared in his favor, laying his own ambition on his country's altar, called the veteran Victoria from his hiding-place to the chief command, while he voluntarily chose a subordinate position; the man who, in 1829, at the head of a force of seven hundred men, basely collected, succeeded, by a series of skilful and bold manœuvres, in defeating and finally capturing a Spanish army of 4,000 veterans, under the command of Gen. Barradas, who had landed at Tampico with the intention of reducing the Mexicans again to the yoke; the man who, in 1841, pronounced Gen. Bustamante, an old commander of reputation, then at the head of affairs, and in command of 8,000 regular troops, and forthwith, with a prompt daring which was always signalized him, took up the line of march against him with but four or five hundred recruits, cannot be either a coward or a traitor.

Mr. Webster made a speech at the public dinner given him at Richmond, general in its remarks, gaudy in its tone. He did not touch directly upon any of the political questions now agitating parties, but he gave utterance to abstract observations, whose bearings upon such questions are not hard to be understood:

"I honor," said he, "as much as any man, the man who has watched the untiring efforts of the Union to sustain the rights of the slaves."

"It was a bold resolution. They trusted to

the hazards of fortune. They hazarded everything for the independence of the old thirteen States. But what, at last, are military achievements? Is it true, that they fixed the fate of Democratic rule? We are unable to comprehend the logic of such hope, unless, indeed, Democracy and Slavery are one and the same thing in the opinion of the Union."

Mr. Webster then proceeded to expatiate upon the excellency of the Federal Constitution, the wisdom of its founders, its beautiful adaptation to the circumstances and character of the people. In the usual vein of our countrymen, he could not forbear instituting comparisons between this country and foreign nations, and finally settling on the axiom, that we are the wisest, greatest, gloriousest of mankind. Assenting to this, as a matter of course, there is still one part of his patriotic laudation which may require some qualification. "It may be said," he remarked, "we are the great untaxed among nations." This is a rhetorical flourish, only excusable amid the hilarity of a public dinner. The burdens of the people in very many of the States are exceedingly oppressive; so much so, that even the horror of rebellion could not induce them to submit to additional taxation. And without taking note of the fact, or being able to form any very exact idea of it, the people of the Union, as a whole, have been taxed enormously in the shape of high protective tariffs. And how is it with the one word of remark, which he has made of the nobility of the slave power? Beyond that, the only point of his speech which is to be inferred is, that it would rather the people of that Territory should remain perpetual aliens than be indulged with a Government prohibiting the introduction of slavery—precisely the ground of Mr. Calhoun. The Whigs of the Senate, though aware of the design of this Senator, will not give up their deep devotion to him, and his friends, &c., and accordingly unite with him in defeating the bill. And now, when Mr. Benton comes out in the public prints with a full exposure of the grounds of slaveholding opposition to the bill, and shows, beyond all doubt, that its friends were baffled because they wished to extend the benefits of the noble ordinance of 1787—an ordinance sanctioned and sustained by Jefferson—we find Whig papers blindly, insanely, passing by all this without one word of remark, set themselves to the subtile employment of ridiculing the style and manner of Mr. Benton! Is this their love for human rights? What need they care for that gentleman's hostility to Mr. Calhoun, or his malignant language? Can they see nothing in the disclosures he made of sufficient importance to check their levity, to awaken their anxiety for the good of their country, to arouse their indignation against the "rabid propagandists of slavery?"

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"The House of Representatives, as early as the

NATIONAL NOMINATING CONVENTION.

There is a national committee appointed to call a convention, and we doubt not every Liberty party and voter will cheerfully respond to their decision. We hope the *Era* is not an exception.

Liberty Standard.

The National Committee, we presume, will hardly venture to fix upon the time for calling a convention, which a very large majority of the Liberty parties have disapproved of. Among Liberty men, as well as in other associations, the majority should govern in matters of expediency. No party can hang together except by an observance of this rule. The members of the committee will doubtless be guided by what they believe to be the opinions of a majority of the Liberty party, and, in forming a judgment on this point, they certainly will give due weight to the indications afforded by the press. Thus far, the suggestion that we hold our convention in the fall, has been sanctioned by only five out of thirty or more Liberty parties.

The Liberty Advocate (Rhode Island) is in favor of deferring the nomination till next spring.

The Charter Oak (Conn.) would prefer next fall, but it adds:

"The advocates of delay appear to be in a majority. Under these circumstances, the minority will probably forbear to press the matter, and content themselves with the alternative of calling a convention in the spring of 1848. This will give us but brief opportunity for organization, and for making the arrangements requisite to bring out a full vote. Our own preference would be for an earlier nomination, but we shall cheerfully assent to the wishes of the majority."

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